EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Ronald Reichman on 5/4/2009.

The application has been amended as follows beginning on the next page:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 19, further comprising:

loading the watermarked digital image data into a postage meter.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:

using the postage meter to print a postage indicia on a mail piece, the postage meter indicia including a printed image based on the watermarked digital image data.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

(a) providing digital image data that represents an image;

(b) applying a digital watermark to the digital image data to produce watermarked digital image data;

(c) applying a print-scan distortion transformation wherein the print-scan transformation approximates the effect of printing and scanning on pixel values of the watermarks digital image data to the watermarked digital image data to produce transformed watermarked digital image data that improves the quality of the digital image data to be printed;

(d) retrieving a characteristic of the watermark as represented by the transformed watermarked digital image data produced at step (c);

(e) printing an image on the basis of the watermarked digital image data produced at step (b);

(f) scanning the printed image to produce scanned image data;

(g) retrieving a characteristic of the watermark as represented by the scanned image data produced at step (f); and

(h) comparing the characteristic retrieved at step (d) with the characteristic retrieved at step (g).

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 19, and 15-16 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

While the closest prior art, Carr et al. (US Patent Application Publication 2003/0130954) disclosed providing digital image data that represents an image, applying a digital watermark to the digital image data to produce watermarked digital image data, retrieving a characteristic of the watermark, printing an image on the basis of the watermarked digital image data, scanning the printed image to produce scanned image data, retrieving a characteristic of the watermark as represented by the scanned image data, and comparing the characteristics, Carr did not disclose

applying a print-scan distortion transformation wherein the print-scan transformation approximates the effect of printing and scanning on pixel values of the watermarks digital image data to the watermarked digital image data to produce transformed watermarked digital image data that improves the quality of the digital image data to be printed. Further, while print-scan compensation is known in the prior art, as show by Ur et al. (US Patent Number 5,813,771), there is no teaching or suggestion in the prior art to utilize a print-scan transformation which approximates the effect of printing and scanning on pixel values of a watermarked digital image data to produce transformed watermarked digital image data that improves the quality of the digital image data to be printed, wherein a characteristic is retrieved from the transformed watermarked digital image data, and further wherein the untransformed watermarked digital image data is printed, then scanned, and then a characteristic is retrieved from the printed and scanned digital image data for comparison with the characteristic retrieved from the transformed watermarked digital image data.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MATTHEW T. HENNING whose telephone number is (571)272-3790. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8-4.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Ayaz Sheikh can be reached on (571) 272-3795. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Matthew T Henning/
Examiner, Art Unit 2431